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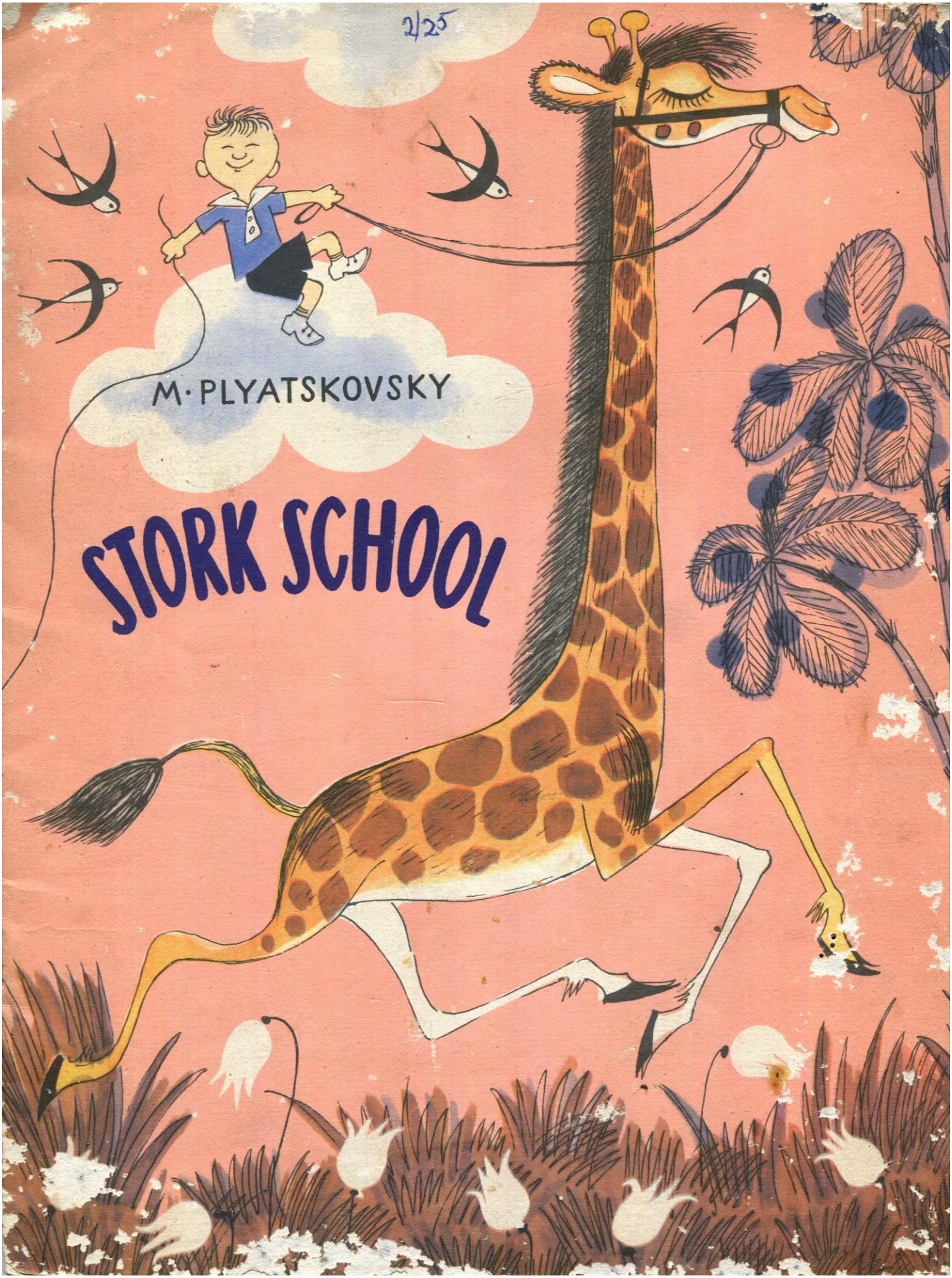

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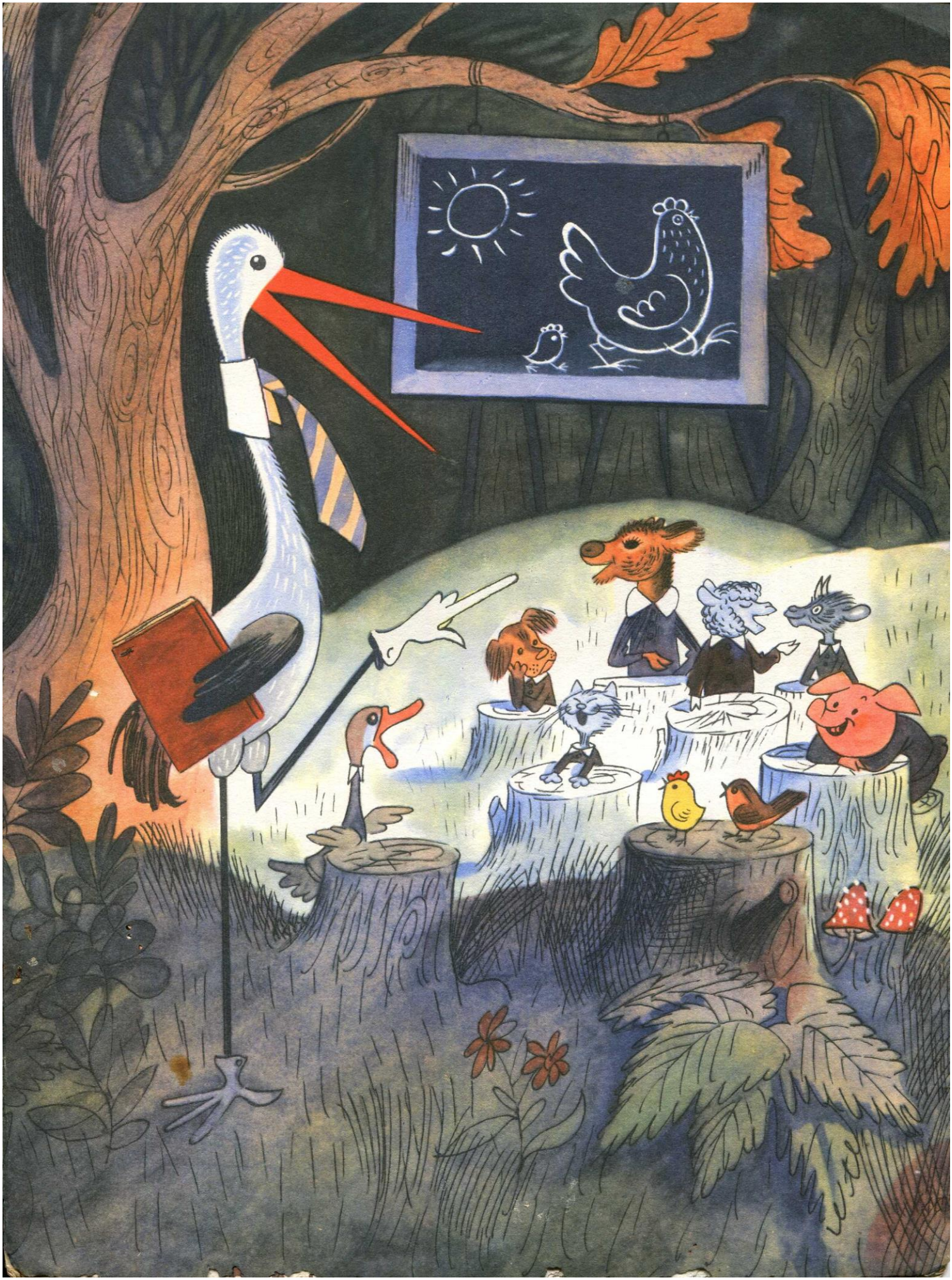
STORK SCHOOL



STORK SCHOOL

Learned Stork decided to start a school in the woods. No sooner said than done. When the young animals had all gathered for their first lesson, Teacher Stork sat them down at their desks. They looked at him and waited for the lesson to begin. Stork wrote a word on the blackboard.

"Now, children," he said, "I want each of you to read this word. Repeat after me: ma-ma."

The animals said nothing. No one uttered a sound.

Teacher Stork went up to Lamb and said, "Now, let's hear you repeat the word."

Try as he would, all Lamb could say was "baa-baa".

Then Teacher Stork asked Kid to try. All he could say was "meh-meh".

Teacher Stork closed his book angrily and said to Puppy, who was looking rather frightened, "Let's hear you say it."

Puppy opened his mouth and said, "BOW-WOW!"

Teacher Stork frowned. "Humph! You can't even say 'bah'!"

When it was Chick's turn he peeped "PEEP-PEEP!"

Sparrow said, "CHIRP-CHIRP!"

Calf said, "MOO-MOO!"

Gosling squawked, "GA-GA!"

Kitten said, "MEOW!"

And Piglet squealed, "OINK-OINK!"

Teacher Stork scratched his head. He was thinking hard. Finally, he gave all of them good marks, because all of them had said "Ma-ma" correctly. It was simply that each of them had said it in his own way.

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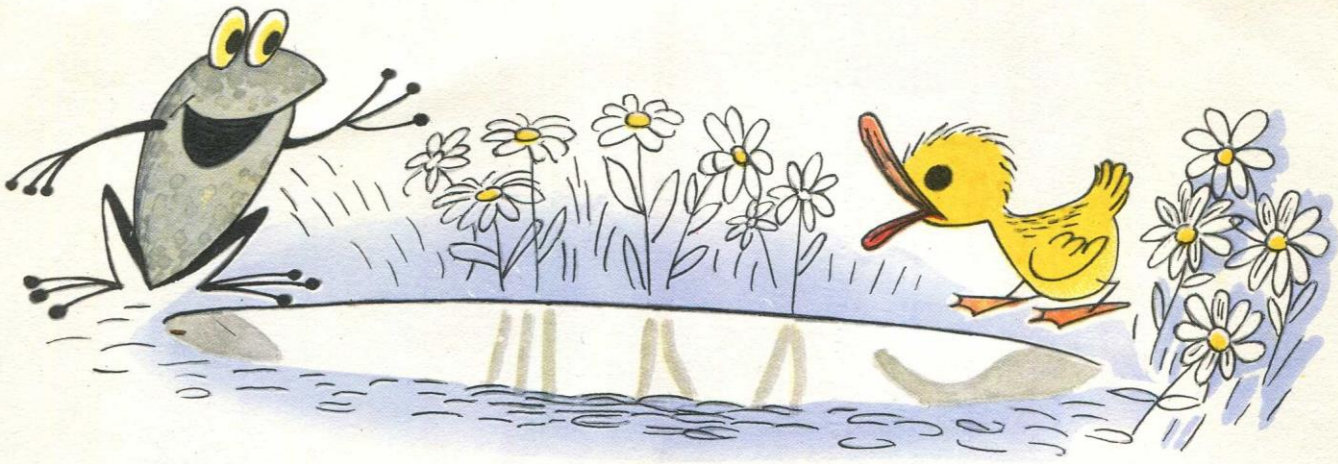


I'M FIRST!

One day Frog and Duckling began to argue. Each one said that he could swim the fastest.

They finally found a very big puddle and stood side by side at the edge.

"Let's count to three," said Duckling.

"All right. I know how to count up to three," said Frog.

They began counting together.

"Quack-quack-quack!" said Duckling.

"Croak-croak-croak!" said Frog.

They quacked and croaked and then jumped into the puddle.

Duckling paddled off as fast as he could. He was nearly across and was sure he had won when he saw Frog sitting on the grass on the other side waiting for him.

Duckling got out of the water and shook himself dry.

Frog laughed and said, "This calls for brains. I jumped across half of the puddle and swam across the other half. That was the smart way to do it!"

A CLEVER SON

Little Gosling's mother took him to a concert. He listened to Grasshopper playing his fiddle and said, "Humph! I can play better than that!"

"Why don't you try?" his mother said, for she did not think children should boast.

"Oh, but I only have two feet. If I hold my fiddle in one foot and my bow in the other, how will I be able to stand on the stage?" her clever son replied.

THE RUBBER

One day Mouse came upon an old rubber shoe. "I really don't need it," she said to herself and was about to continue on her way when she saw Mole coming down the path.

"Is that your rubber?" Mole asked, blinking at it.

"Yes," said Mouse.

"Will you give it to me?"

"If you dig me a good wide burrow I will," said sly Mouse.

Mole was a good digger and he soon had a fine burrow ready for Mouse. "Here's your new home, Mouse. I'm taking the rubber."

Mouse was very pleased and ran down the tunnel to see her new home. Meanwhile, as Mole dragged the rubber along he wondered what he would do with it. He was just about to leave it in the grass when he saw Hedgehog.

"Is that your rubber?" she asked.

"Certainly."

"Won't you let me have it?"

"If you bring me a dozen apples from your storeroom I will."

Hedgehog stuck a dozen apples on her quills and brought them to Mole. He was very pleased with the exchange.

Now that the rubber was hers, Hedgehog didn't know what to do with it. She was just about to leave it on the ground when Squirrel came hopping towards her.

"Is this your rubber?" Squirrel asked.

"It certainly is."

"Would you give it to me?"

"I will if you bring me the biggest pine cone you can find. And be sure it's full of nuts!"

When Squirrel brought her a really big pine cone Hedgehog said, "Ah, that's lovely! Now crack the nuts for me and you can have the rubber."

Squirrel didn't say that that wasn't part of the bargain. Instead, she quickly cracked the nuts. Hedgehog crawled off into the bushes to munch on her nuts and see what Squirrel would do with the rubber.

Squirrel, meanwhile, was busily stuffing leaves into a few holes in the rubber. Then she made a yoke from a springy twig and two pails from two large acorns. Soon she was running back and forth, filling the rubber with water from a nearby stream. And then.... And then she plopped Baby Squirrel into the new bathtub and gave him a bath. Baby Squirrel squealed with delight. He kicked and splashed water in all directions.

Just then Mouse came running up. "Give me back my rubber, Squirrel, and you can have my nice new burrow."

Mole came stumbling along and said, "Give me back my rubber, Squirrel, and I'll give you a dozen apples."

Hedgehog crawled out from the bushes and said, "Give me back my rubber, Squirrel, and I'll give you a whole pile of pine nuts."

Squirrel listened to each and every one of them and said, "I don't need anything in exchange. I'll gladly share my rubber with you. You can all bathe your children here."

Mouse and Mole and Hedgehog felt so ashamed of themselves for being selfish that they would have blushed if they could only have done so.

THE KINDLY HORSE

"I can crow better than anyone!" boasted the cock.

"I can walk across a ceiling," boasted the fly.

"I can hear every sound and rustle," boasted the cat.

"I can see in the dark," boasted the owl.

"But I... can't do ...anything," the chick peeped and large tears ran from his brown eyes. He wept so bitterly that all the others ran away.

Only the kindly horse that could pull a wagon remained.

"Don't worry, dear," said the horse to the chick. "You also know how ... to chase braggarts away!"

DO AS I DO

One day a cat was strolling by a lake and saw a heron standing in the water near the bank. It would dip its head into the water, move its long bill around and come up with a silvery fish.

The cat was very envious. He came up closer and said, "That's quite a trick. You just dip your bill into the lake and catch a fish each time."

"There's really nothing to it. I'll show you how if you want me to."

"Oh, will you?" the cat said excitedly.

"There's a secret to good fishing."

"What is it?"

"See me standing on one leg?"

"Yes."

"That's the secret. The fish are dying to know whether I'll topple over or not and so they swim up very close to see. That's when I grab them."

"It sounds easy. I'll try my luck," said the cat.

"You do that," the heron said slyly.

The cat entered the water gingerly and tried to pick up three paws at once. He couldn't do it. He never dreamed it was so hard to stand on one paw. After several tries he tumbled over und got all wet. He stood there trembling and wet, his whiskers dripping and his teeth chattering.

"If you can't learn to stand on one leg, you'll never learn to fish properly," the heron said and trotted off into the reeds, feeling quite pleased.

The cat trudged home. He was grumpy and grouchy, for he had got wet for nothing. Besides, the heron had played a trick on him.

HOW DEEP IS THE RIVER?

A calf and a little pig were the best of friends. Wherever one went, the other followed.

If the calf went out of the barnyard to the meadow the pig would run squealing after him. If the pig ran down the hill to the hollow the calf would follow along on his long legs.

One day as they were prancing about in the meadow they came to the edge of the river.

"Let's cross over," said the calf.

"All right," his friend grunted.

The calf entered the water and plowed along to the middle. The water barely reached above his knees.

"Come on in! Don't be afraid! It's not deep!" he shouted to the pig.

The pig ran in after his friend, but soon the water was up to his ears.

"Help! Help!" he squealed.

The calf bounded back and carried the pig across.

"Why did you fool me? Why did you say it wasn't deep?" the pig shouted.

"I didn't fool you."

"But it's very deep!"

"No, it isn't!"

"Yes, it is!"

"But it isn't!"

They shouted at each other and finally got so angry that each stamped off. But they shouldn't have argued, because each of them was right.

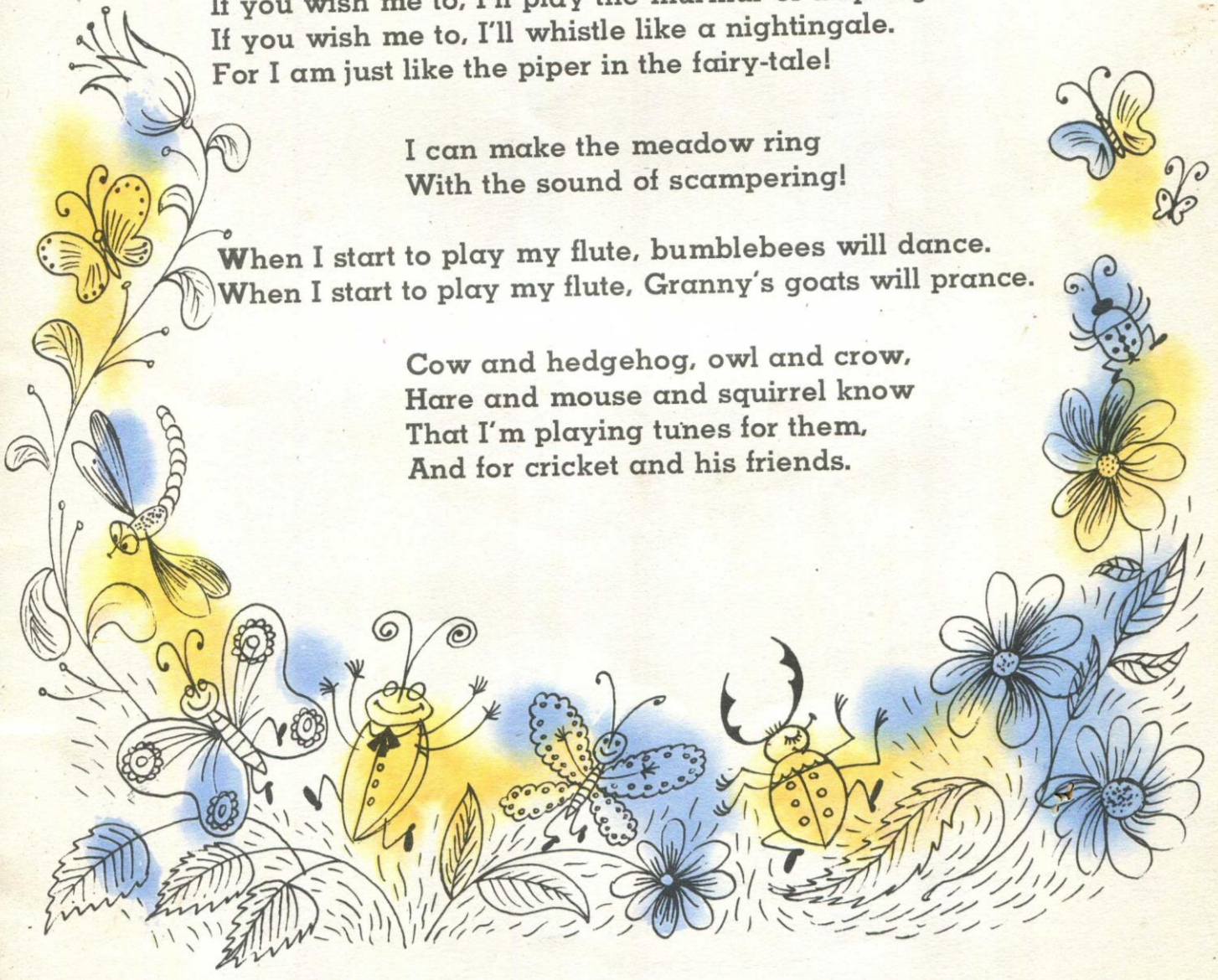
MY FLUTE

See the pretty flute I've made. It is big and brown.
I can play you any tune, pipe you any sound.
If you wish me to, I'll play the whisper of the wind.
If you wish me to, I'll play the murmur of a spring.
If you wish me to, I'll whistle like a nightingale.
For I am just like the piper in the fairy-tale!

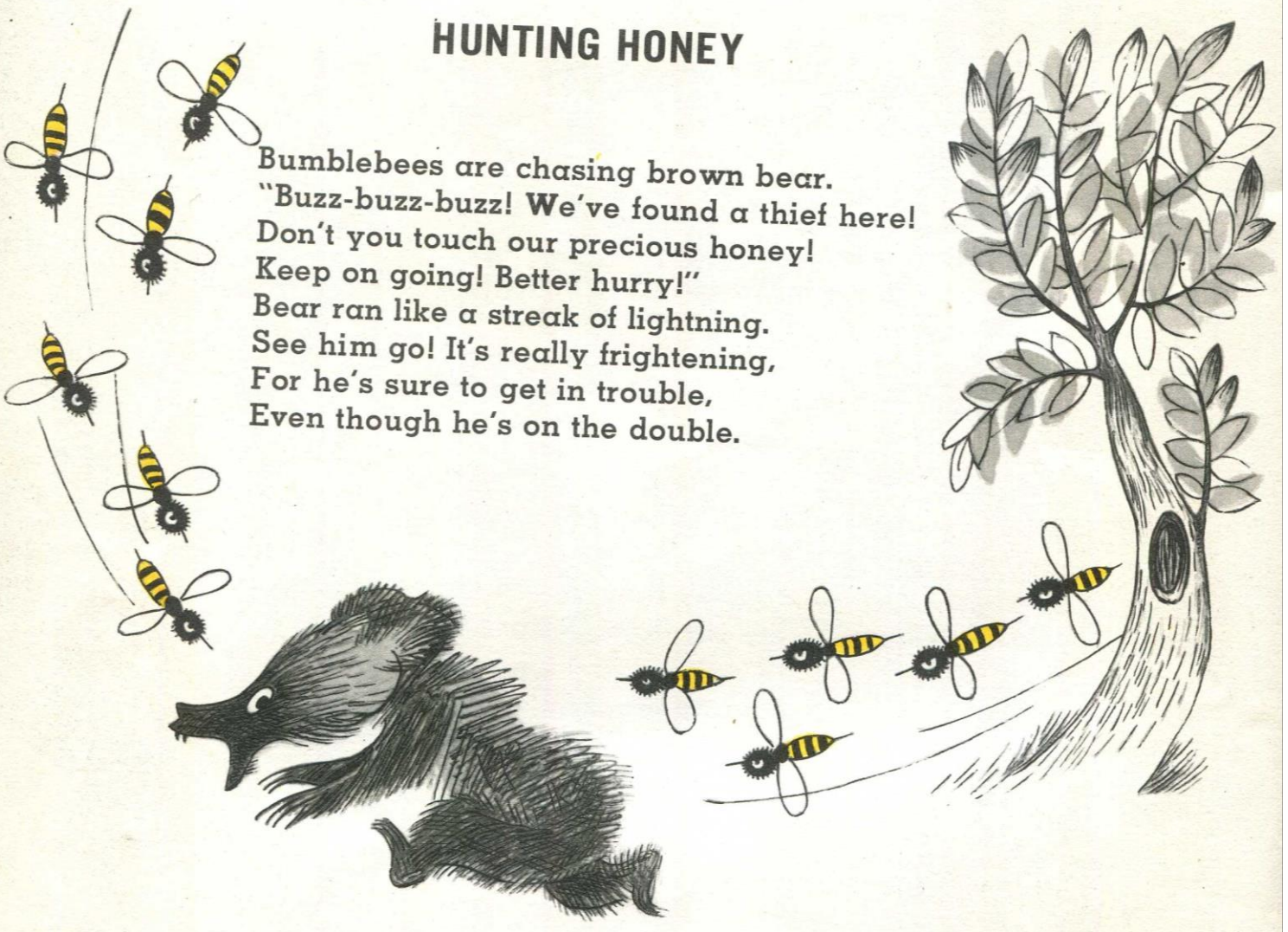
I can make the meadow ring
With the sound of scampering!

When I start to play my flute, bumblebees will dance.
When I start to play my flute, Granny's goats will prance.

Cow and hedgehog, owl and crow,
Hare and mouse and squirrel know
That I'm playing tunes for them,
And for cricket and his friends.



HUNTING HONEY



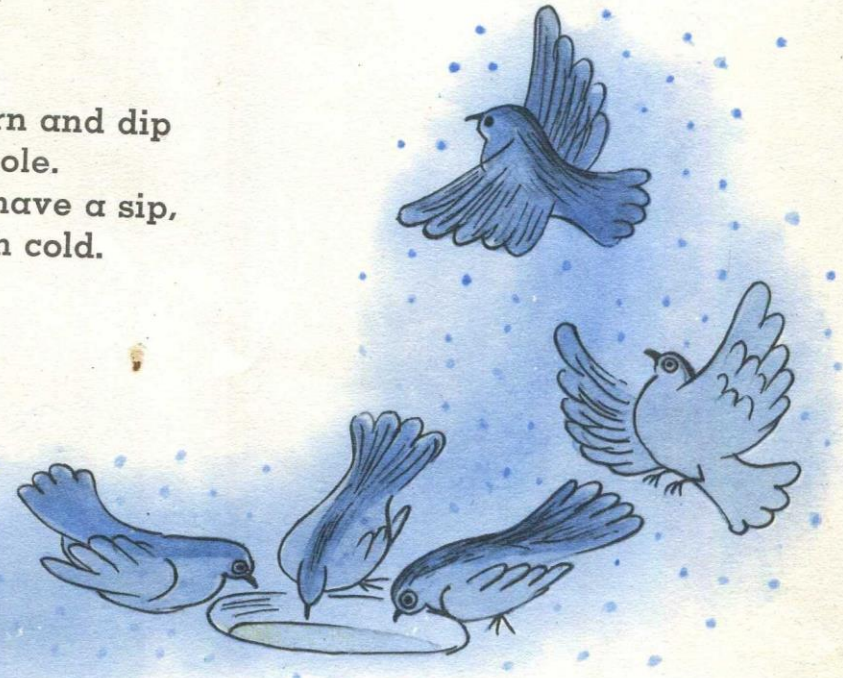
Bumblebees are chasing brown bear.
"Buzz-buzz-buzz! We've found a thief here!
Don't you touch our precious honey!
Keep on going! Better hurry!"
Bear ran like a streak of lightning.
See him go! It's really frightening,
For he's sure to get in trouble,
Even though he's on the double.

THE MUSHROOM

"Dear Mushroom, why are you just like an umbrella?"
A hedgehog once said to a red-spotted fellow.
"How strange that you ask such an obvious question.
I grow in the rain, as do all my relations."

DOVES IN WINTER

White doves turn and dip
Near a water-hole.
Each will only have a sip,
So it won't catch cold.



THE ALARM CLOCK

His bill and tail bob up and down
When he starts scratching in the ground.

His spurs are something many dread,
A big red comb adorns his head.

He crows, "Good morning! Wake up! Hey!"
And gets us up at dawn each day.
He's really an alarm clock
Our brightly-feathered cock!

FLYING ON A CLOUD

I was flying on a cloud
And I was feeling very proud

As I leafed through funny books
And I fed some black-winged rooks.

Then I patched my cloud a bit,
For it had a little rip.

I hope you won't feel envious,
Since I was dreaming all of this!

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY FAINNA GLAGOLEVA

DRAWINGS BY V. CHIZHIKOV

М. ПЛЯЦКОВСКИЙ

Я НА ОБЛАКЕ ЛЕТАЛ

Рис. В. ЧИЖИКОВА

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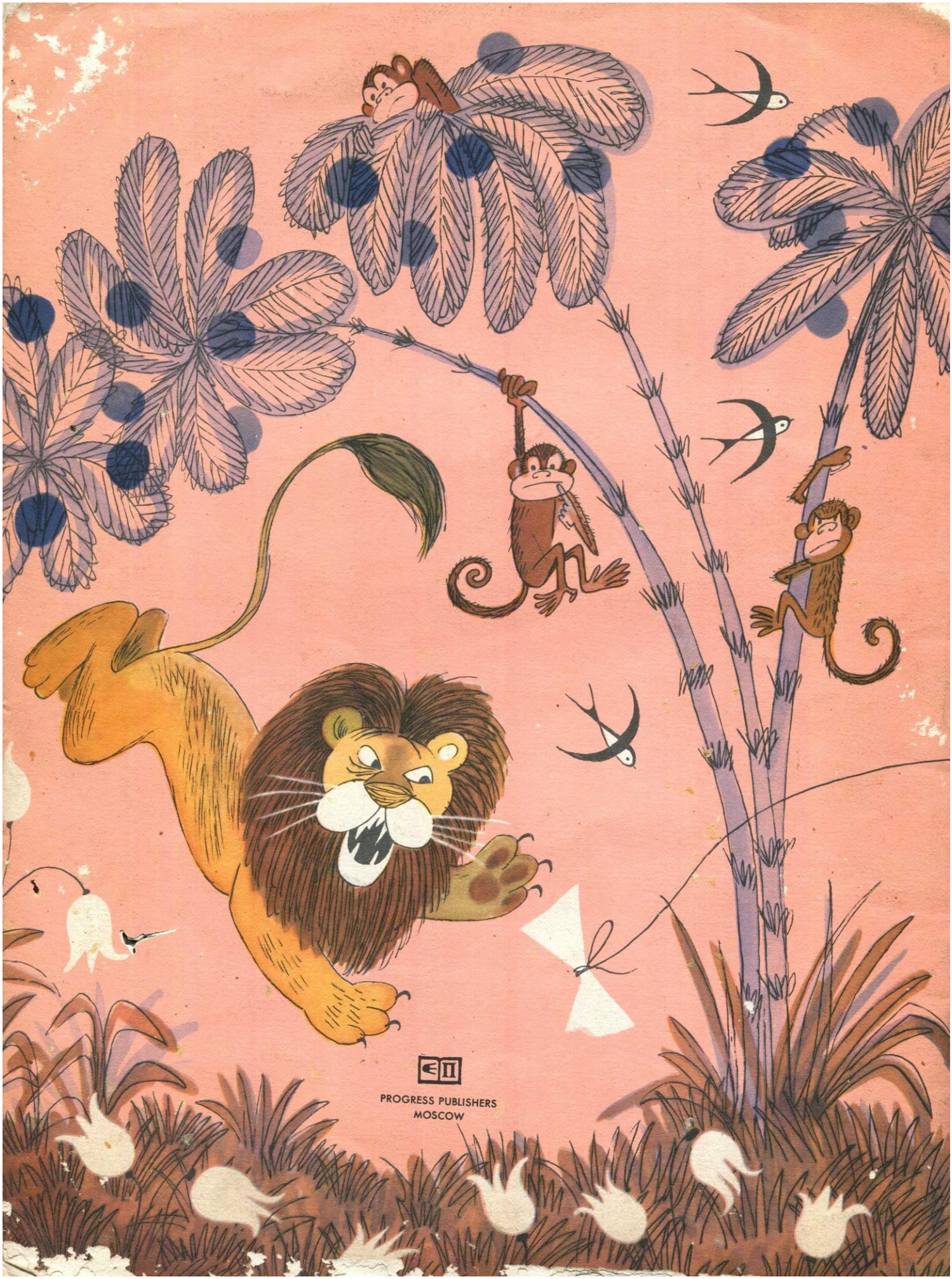

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